

**Town of Royalston
Board of Selectmen's Meeting
Tuesday, March 27, 2007
7:00 p.m.**

Present: Andrew West, Chairman; Thomas Kellner, Clerk; and Linda Alger, Member.

1. Chairman West called the meeting to order at 7:07 p.m.
2. The minutes of the 3/6/07 meeting were read. One addition and two corrections were noted. Mr. Kellner made a motion to accept the minutes as amended. Ms. Alger seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous in favor.
3. Acknowledgements/Announcements/Correspondence:
 - a) Mr. West noted that this would be Mr. Kellner's last meeting and thanked him for all his hard work while on the Board.
 - b) The Strategic Planning meeting held last week was very informative. More meetings will be held in the future.
 - c) Mr. Kellner received correspondence from a customer service representative at Verizon stating that there would be no break in the cost for the pay phone located at the public safety building.
 - d) Mr. Kellner made a motion to sign a temporary permit for the Friends of the Library to serve wine during their Documentary Filmmakers Series on 3/31, 4/13 and 4/27/07. Ms. Alger seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous in favor.
 - e) Mr. Kellner made a motion to approve a request from Vicki Paine to post political signs from 3/28 – 4/6/07. Ms. Alger seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous in favor.
 - f) Ms. Alger made a motion to appoint election workers Barbara Richardson, Teller, Precinct One and Joyce Neale, Teller, Precinct Two. Mr. Kellner seconded, with the Board voting unanimously in favor.
 - g) Mr. Kellner made a motion to request a transfer of \$4,737.25 to the liability insurance line item. Ms. Alger seconded, with the Board voting unanimously in favor.
4. Department Heads Reports:
 - a) DPW –
 - 1) Keith Newton has received a letter from the District Office stating that the town may receive reimbursement for expenses incurred during the washout of Route 68. He will put invoices together, and the Board will generate a letter to the District.
 - 2) A pre-bid meeting was held for the Engineering and Development RFP for the Route 32 project. There were 16 interested parties in attendance. Bids are due on 4/4/07.
 - 3) Mr. Newton gave a reminder that it is now mud season and weight limits on roadways are being strictly enforced. He requested cooperation from residents as he is trying to protect the future of the town's roads.
 - b) Sewer Commission – Gary Winitzer reported that there would be another sewer connection on River Road, with the possibility of two others in the next year. The fee for a new connection is \$2,000.
5. Budget Hearings with Department Heads:
 - a) **DPW** - Keith Newton presented his budget to the Board. He projects a 14% increase in the Highway General account due to new accounts he would like to establish such as a calcium program for gravel roads and police details on some road projects. He also anticipates a significant increase in diesel and gas. Mr. Kellner made a motion to endorse

the projected DPW budget as presented. Ms. Alger seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous in favor.

- b) **Fire Department, 24-Hour Dispatch, and Emergency Management** – Fire Chief Wayne Newton presented the proposed **Fire Department** budget of \$73,800, an increase of \$10,000 from last year. The Board requested an itemized breakdown of the budget line items. The proposed budget for **24-Hour Dispatch** was presented at a total of \$22,778, which is level funded from last year. Chief Newton explained that Franklin Regional County of Governments is supposed to bill the town, but has not done so yet for this year. Therefore, there is no projected amount known for next year. Kelly Newton, speaking on behalf of the 24-Hour Dispatch Committee, stated that because this is the 1st year on the new system, they want to be able to maintain it for one year just to be on the safe side. The Committee will not know until year's end. A cushion for maintenance of the base radio is needed. The Board requested a breakdown of the budget proposal. Mr. Kellner felt that the pay phone at the public safety building should be removed, which would save approximately \$100/month. Chief Newton reported that since Herve Bosse has resigned, he plans to ask Mike Lajoie if he will be the Civilian Defense (**Emergency Management**) officer at the same amount as last year, \$1650.
- c) At this time, Mr. West made a motion to open the warrant for the Annual Town Meeting to be held on Friday, May 11, 2007 at 7:00 p.m. at Royalston Community School. Mr. Kellner seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous in favor.
- d) Chief Newton then presented five articles for the ATM warrant. Discussion was held regarding the articles.
- e) **Library Budget** - Kathy Morris presented the budget proposal for the Library. She is requesting a 3% increase in wages; 2% cost of living and 1% merit. She explained that the major difference is in the expense account due to maintenance issues and the rising cost of utilities. Ms. Alger expressed concern about the wage increase as the Board is keeping to 2-1/2% as a standard. A discussion was held regarding COLA vs. merit increases. Mr. West felt that a policy should be established for merit increases. Mr. Kellner made a motion to support the budget as presented. Ms. Alger seconded the motion. The Board voted unanimously in favor.

Department Heads Reports (continued):

- c) **Building Department** – Mr. West presented a copy of a petition to Geoffrey Newton, Inspector of Buildings, from members of the Second Congregational Church asking that the Board move forward on the demolition of 1 School Street. Mr. Newton has been in contact with the tax collector, who stated that the property is currently in tax title. Therefore, he has not gone forward with any court action. He did speak with the clerk magistrate about the town getting back taxes from the property owner, a Financial Corporation in Braintree. Mr. Newton stated that a favorable legal decision could determine that the owner must bear the expense of demolishing the structure and also be ordered to pay back taxes. Mr. Kellner stated that the treasurer re-filed the tax title paperwork about a year ago. Mr. Newton will initiate court action. The proposed budget for the Building Department was also discussed. Mr. Newton is requesting \$1,100 for a secretary and \$550 for prosecution, which are new line items. He has also requested a salary increase of 3%. Mr. Alger moved to endorse the expense budget amount of \$4,456.38. Mr. Kellner seconded, with the Board voting unanimously in favor. Mr. Kellner moved to endorse the salary budget amount of \$10,768.25, a 2-1/2% increase. Ms. Alger seconded. The vote was all in favor.

6. New Business:

- a) **Town Hall Use** – Mr. West advocated for Helen Divoll to book events at the Town Hall. Mr. Kellner stated that fees are waived for municipal functions or those that benefit the town. No action was taken until a policy can be developed.
- b) **High School Interns** – Mr. West explained that interns from Athol High School are available to assist in appropriate departments. Job descriptions need to be provided.

- c) T1 Line at Whitney Hall – Mr. West has found a reseller that sells Verizon phone service at a significant savings. He feels that it is worthwhile to change the phone system. A network will be needed for Whitney Hall in order to get the high-speed Internet access. Jon Hardie has offered to do wiring for the cost of the equipment. It would take up to six weeks for the changeover to occur once paperwork is signed. This would cover all phones on the system. Mr. Kellner made a motion to make arrangements to go forward with the new phone plan. Ms. Alger seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous in favor.
 - d) Sally Zettel, Treasurer, spoke about securing a loan from Athol Savings Bank in the amount of \$300,000. Along with other invoices, the payment to the school district is past due, and it is needed in order for the district to make payroll. Mr. West made a motion to borrow \$300,000 from Athol Savings Bank for 45 days at 5% interest and to request a reserve fund transfer to the interest account of \$1,333.33. Mr. Kellner seconded. The Board voted unanimously in favor.
- 7. At 11:00 p.m., Mr. West made a motion to go to Executive Session to discuss pending litigation and to resume the meeting to sign the Treasury Warrant only. Mr. Kellner seconded the motion. The vote was Ms. Alger, yes; Mr. West, yes; and Mr. Kellner, yes.
 - 8. At 11:27 p.m., the regular meeting was reconvened and the treasury warrant was signed.
 - 9. Mr. Kellner made a motion to adjourn at 11:30 p.m. Ms. Alger seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous in favor.

Minutes recorded by Diana Newton.